

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method for the continuous maturation of beer after main fermentation, said maturation method comprising the steps of: passing unmatured beer, after removal of yeast and a heat treatment, through a bio-reactor filled with a carrier material having yeast immobilised thereon, wherein said carrier material comprises wood particles; and maintaining said unmatured beer in contact with said yeast for a sufficient amount of time to reduce 90-97% of the diacetyl contained in said unmatured beer into acetoin.

2. (cancelled)

3. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the wood particles comprise deciduous wood.

4. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the wood particles comprise coniferous wood.

5. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the wood particles have been produced from tropical gramineous plants.

6. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the yeast used in the bio-reactor is one of conventional brewing yeast and highly flocculable yeast.

7. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the amount of yeast in the bio-reactor is $10^6 - 10^9$ cells/1 cm³ of particles.

8. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the temperature in the bio-reactor is 5 - 25 °C.

9. (currently amended) The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the flow rate of unmaturred beer through the bio-reactor is ~~on the order of~~ 0.05 - 2 times the bio-reactor volume / h.

10. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 1, further including the step of regenerating the particles after use using hot water or steam.

11. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 1, further including the step of pre-treating the particles prior to immobilisation of the yeast.

12. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 11, wherein the particles are washed.

13. (cancelled)

14. (cancelled)

15. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 1 wherein a maximum dimension of the particles is 1-100 mm.

16. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 15 wherein a maximum dimension of the particles is 1-50 mm.

17. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 15 wherein a maximum dimension of the particles is 2-20 mm.

18. (original) The method as defined in claim 8 wherein the temperature in the bio-reactor is 5-20°C.

19. (currently amended) The method as defined in claim 9 wherein the flow rate of unmaturred beer through the bio-reactor is ~~on the order of~~ 0.5-1 times the bio-reactor volume / h.

20. (previously presented) The method as defined in claim 11 wherein the pre-treating step is further defined as subjecting the particles to one of a water soaking treatment or ethanol extraction treatment prior to immobilization of the yeast.

21. (cancelled)

22. (cancelled)

23. (cancelled)

24. (cancelled)

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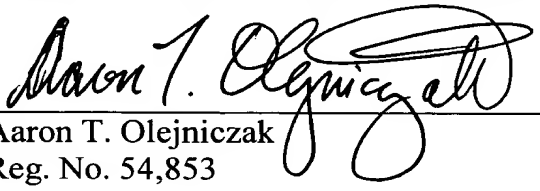
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Response to Non-Compliant Amendment Mailed 01/23/04

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